City experienced many changes in 1983

By Barbara Rollins-Reed

As 1984 arrives, city council and administrative personnel are involved in several issues which could result in landmark decisions for the future of Poquoson.

As Poquoson continued throughout 1983 to be one of the fastest growing communities in the commonwealth, growth , the landfill, personnel changes, and the replacement of heating systems at the elementary and middle schools dominated the news picture.

Citizens began voicing concern over problems associated with the rapid growth.

The Planning Commission recommended approval of two new housing developments, Parkview Estates at South Lawson and Valmoor Estates.Homeowners voiced concern over drainage of the area by a 35-foot drainage ditch to be constructed at Valmoore. They were assured the water would be diverted by the ditch.

Harriet Callahan and Betty Deans held a meeting of citizens in the area of Valmoor Estates to organize protests against the subdivision. They urged council to stop growth in the city until studies could be made to determine impact of future development on traffic, flooding, drainage pollution, erosion and sewage in the city. They pointed out that plans were under way for development which could add as many as 777 new homes in the city. (The figure was later changed to approximately 650.)

At an Aug. 1 work session discussion of growth in the city resulted in council agreeing to get a handle on future development. The Aug. 8 council meeting saw homeowners once again protesting against Valmoor and future developments. Council passed a resolution setting goals and objectives for future residential growth. They also passed an ordinance to increase minimum lot size for residential lots served by public sewer to 20,000 sq. ft. and for residential lots served by individual sewer disposal systems to a minimum of two acres.

The Wetlands Board approved the Valmoor subdivision. Homeowners again voiced their concern over drainage and appealed the decision to the Marine Resources Board. After hearing the appeal, the Marine Resources Board upheld the decision of the Wetlands Board.

Council held a special session Nov. 7 to discuss past growth and ways to develop plans to insure more controlled growth in the city. On Dec. 12 council reviewed plans for a new 52-unit townhouse development and a 158-unit apartment complex.

At a special meeting Dec. 21, council approved plans to develop the position of Community Development Coordinator.

Landfill

It was determined by the State Health Department that the landfill was being operated in violation of rules and regulations governing solid waste disposal facilities and must conform or close.

Alternative solutions were discussed and specifications developed for bid on Jul. 3. Bids were opened July 29. All submitted bids were rejected and new specifications were drawn. Bids were once again solicited and were opened on Dec. 5.

Council reviewed the bids at a special meeting Dec. 21 and voted to reject the bids, and redraft specifications.

Personnel changes

On Apr. 18, then City Manager James Lord hired Jay Pottorf as Assistant City Manager and his appointment was confirmed by council.

Mayor Howard Forrest resigned effective Jul. 1, followed by the resignation of Lord effective Jul. 27. Former Mayor Joseph Bunting replaced Forrest, and former City Manager George Dickerson agreed to once again serve in the position for 60 days while council searched for a replacement.

Dickerson served through Oct. 31, when Assistant City Manager Jay Pottorf was appointed to serve as City Manager until Robert Murphy from Nelson County could report on Nov. 28.

Parks and Recreation Director Eddie Lee Freeman resigned his position in May and James Conover was appointed in that position effective Jun. 27.

General accomplishments

As part of the Trinity Neighborhood Rehabilitation Project Grant, residents of Ridge and Messick Roads were able to connect to the new city sewer line.

An 18-month freeze on State Literary Loan money caused a delay in the replacement of the heating systems at the elementary and middle schools. Council approved a short-term loan of $800,000 so the heaters could be installed for the 1984-85 school year.

Recognizing in 1968 that Route 171 between Poquoson and Route 134 were extremely dangerous to travelers, Poquoson and York County renewed efforts to have the project placed on the Department of Highways and Transportations priority list. Enlisting the aid of State Representatives Shirley Cooper and Richard Bagley, and Senator Hunter B. Andrews, the project, for the third time, was released for bids. The contract was awarded to Henry S. Branscome, Inc., of Williamsburg with work to begin in late October and early November.

The city purchased the vacated First National Bank building at 730 Poquoson Avenue, to house a new, expanded public library. The library was moved into the new building on Apr. 16 and a grand opening celebrated during the week Oct. 16 through 21.

The building on Odd Road, vacated by the move of the school system, rennovated, and became the Poquoson Community Center.

Clearing and construction of extensive park facilities at South Lawson to include a man-make lake began with a deadline for completion of June 1, 1984.

A physical fitness trail was installed in Municipal Park through efforts of Parks and Recreation Department in coordination with Hampton General Hospital.

Awards and recognition

Police officer Anne Dunbar became the first woman in Eastern Virginia to be promoted to the rank of sergeant.

Three men robbed the First Virginia Bank on Jul. 14. Officer Charles Buffington pursued them into Hampton and was instrumental in their capture. The first suspect, Noah Lee Faulk, was found guilty and sentenced to 84 years in jail. The other two suspects are scheduled for trial in the early part of 1984. Buffington received recognition and awards from the city and various civic organizations for outstanding performance of his duties.

Poquoson's Rosalyn Hahn became the first District 96 representative to the Silver-Haired Legislature.

The Poquoson Tidewater Challenge team for school year 1982-83 emerged as champions out of 47 starting school systems.

The Lady Islander Baseball team won their second consecutive state championship in June.

Emmaus Baptist Church celebrated 150th anniversary on Jul. 10.

General changes

The tax on real estate was raised in support of the 1983-84 budget from 77 cents to 80 cents per $100 assessed value.

A thirty-year contract with VEPCO expired July 1, 1982 and rates for 1983 and subsequent years were increased from one cent per kilowatt hour to over 5 cents.

The Parks and Recreation Commission set user fees for playing fields to help cover the cost of electricity for night games.

High school graduation standards were raised, requiring graduating seniors in four years to have 22 credits.

The Family Life curriculum was added to school system.